and reared in poverty. Not until middle life did he achieve prominence. Then, enlisting as a soldier, he quickly displayed ability, rose rapidly to high command, subdued a number of revolts, and carried the boundaries of the Chin to the Yellow River in successful fighting against the northern states. Liu Yii took advantage of the virtual dictatorship which these victories gave him to have the feeble Emperor killed. He set up another of the Ssu-ma line who soon abdicated (by request) and shortly afterward was also killed, Liu Yii, who had been known as prince of Sung, now established a new dynasty by that name. To distinguish it from the later and more renowned dynasty of Sung it is often called the Liu Sung.

The fall of the Eastern Chin (420) is usually said to mark the beginning of the era known to the Chinese as the Nan Pei Ch'ao, or the Southern and Northern Dynasties, which lasted until 589. Another classification—inclusive of a longer period—employed by Chinese historians is the Six Dynasties, by which are meant the six kingdoms and dynasties between the downfall of the Han and the reunification of China in 589 which had for their capital what is now Nanking. They were Wu, the Eastern Chin, the Liu Sung, the Southern Ch'i, the Liang, and the Ch'en. In reality the end of the Eastern Chin marked no especial revolution. China was divided, to be sure, but not much more so than it had been for decades. The confusion became only a little more confounded.

The Liu Sung quickly ran its course. Liu Yii, known to posterity by the familiar title Wu Ti, did not long enjoy the power for which he had murdered his masters, but died in 423. The seven members of his family who successively followed him on

the throne were short-lived. Four came to violent ends before reaching their twentieth birthday, and the oldest, known to posterity as Wen Ti, who reigned for nearly thirty years and under whom the realm experienced a fair degree of prosperity, was put to death by his own son. Family wars and intrigues make the chronicles of the dynasty peculiarly sordid and bloody. By a certain rough justice of fate, the Liu Sung was brought to a close, as it had been begun, by a vigorous general. Hsiao Tao-ch'eng, its chief commander, slew the last two Emperors of the line and, in 479, placed himself on the throne.

Hsiao Tao-ch'eng became the first Emperor of the dynasty